

## AIR RAIDS CUTTING HUNS' SUPPLY LINES

## Vital Geographical Factors in Coming Offensives on The West Front

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DURING the continued lull before the opening of this season's fighting—the lull every moment of which is filled with preparation for the great coming struggle—it is of value to learn to appreciate the importance of certain geographical facts which are and will be closely connected with the last stages of the Great War. They should be especially interesting to the American public, since the names of most of the points involved are already familiar to it from the press. But the geographical meanings of these places and their importance in military maneuvers are still not understood by that public, and unless they learn to understand them during this time of waiting the movements of the war which will soon begin will be difficult to follow.

First, as to the points of bombardment of which from the air one reads of almost daily in the present development of the aerial offensive by the Allies—which, by the way, is proving the increasing superiority of the Allied air forces. Treves, on the Moselle; the railway junctions outside of Thionville and Metz; Mannheim and Ludwigshafen opposite; the airdromes behind the Belgian towns near the North Sea coast—all these are outside the actual war zone, but are the points which most concern us.

## Choking Off the Attacks on Britain

The bombardment of the airdromes behind the Belgian coast has for its principal object interference with the German air raids on London and on other points on the coast of Southern England. The craft used by the Germans for these raids over the sea start their expeditions from very large concentration points, where they are stationed. These are not numerous and are thoroughly known to the British. The perpetual harassing of them by bomb dropping interrupts, though it cannot as yet put a complete end to, the air offensive against the civilian centres of Britain. It is really, although civilian imaginations are slow to seize that fact, much the best defence that London has against attack from the air.

Mannheim and Ludwigshafen, apart from the great manufacturing of war material which are located there, form a point of great importance for two reasons. The first is that one of the chief crossings of the Rhine is there. The second is that from the very fact of its being a principal crossing six lines of railway converge upon it. Unfortunately Mannheim is not far from the extreme limit possible for successful air work on a large scale at the present stage of development. It represents a radius of approximately 150 miles.

Individual machines can, of course, go many times that distance and drop a bomb or two on their way. We have even had one case of an airman flying from France to very nearly beyond the German lines in Russia; but for engine trouble he would have crossed those lines and landed on friendly soil. There was another case of a Frenchman flying from behind the trench lines in Lorraine, passing over Metz, where he dropped bombs successfully on the railway station, and landing safely behind the Italian lines in the Venetian plain. But for continued raids by many machines carrying a considerable weight of explosives Mannheim represents, not indeed the last limit of possibly effective radius, but still a lengthy one.

The two junctions outside of Metz and Thionville are more important, though the latter is much more delicate, because the French naturally desire to spare these two chief towns of Lorraine as much as possible. Luckily for the Allies, the railway junctions at both places are well outside of the densely populated area.

## Breaking Railway Lines for 70 Miles

The importance of these two junctions is this: That if both can be completely interrupted there will be no direct railway communication between the German bases and the German front over a gap of something like seventy miles. As points for the concentration of German troops, either in support of their front lines or during rest periods, they are also of great importance.

But although less understood because the place is of comparatively small strategic importance, Treves (which it will be noted is much more frequently bombed from the air than any other place) is the most important of all these Allied air objectives. If you will look at your map you will see that north of the Moselle Valley there is a large hilly forest district, with very few roads and no large towns, lying partly in Belgium and partly in the Rhinish provinces of the German Empire. It includes the Ardennes, the



The objectives of the Allies' air raids, marked on the map by the heavy circles, fall into two main groups. The less important is that to the north, the airdromes (not all can be indicated), whence the Huns start for London. Far more vital is the southern group, where the flyers' bombs fall on the vital railway junction over which supplies for the German front must pass.

Elifel and what the Belgians call "Haute Range."

Though there is one line of railway crossing this country the whole district is little suitable, because of isolation and the broken character of the ground, for good communication, and the single railway is not a main line and does not lead up to the system on which the German front in France depends for its supplies. It is, in fact, a blind alley, ending in the Ardennes and only reaching the German front by roundabout ways.

The two great avenues of supply for this front are to the north and south of this mass of hills and forest; to the north goes the great backbone railway of Northern Europe—the Paris-Berlin line, of which the crossing of the Rhine is at Cologne and the crossing of the Meuse is at Liège. This railroad was the chief artery of communication for the original German advance. To the south of this mass of hills is the line of the Moselle Valley, and Treves is the knot or junction point for all its communications, in addition to being a considerable depot for men and material.

## Most Important Point of Attack

The continued bombardment of Treves, therefore, of which the railway stations by this time have been destroyed, is of the highest strategic value. It is, luckily for the Allies, easier to reach than almost any other point of equal importance behind the enemy's line. It is only 75 miles from the airdromes whence the Allies' offensive bombing planes start. Roughly, that is only about half the distance from the airdromes to Mannheim. That means that half of the weight in petrol which the planes destined for Mannheim would have to carry is saved in a raid on Treves, and in mere mileage it means that there is much less than half the risk of being hit by the anti-aircraft guns on going or on coming back.

In this matter, by the way, the actual mileage is an insufficient index of the comparative dangers, because the risk obviously increases more rapidly than the distance—the time to send warnings and to prepare resistance ahead of the raiding planes being a function which rises in efficiency more rapidly than the direct trajectory of the flight. The same is true of the liability to engine trouble, of the exhaustion of petrol, etc.

The other geographical point which ought to be understood upon your side of the Atlantic is the political geography of the states which the Germans and Austrians are now carving out of the western provinces of what was once the Russian Empire.

It is a mere commonplace, of course, which we all take for granted, that if Prussia can obtain a negotiated peace she will turn these states into dependencies of the great Central European empire of which she will be the head, and that although they will enjoy some form of nominal autonomy they will, if she is unbeaten in this war, be no more than provinces under her dominion. They will certainly, for instance, have to furnish contingents of troops as her allies in any future war, and they will still more certainly be economically at the mercy of German exploitation. All this, I say, is understood everywhere in Europe and taken for granted. It is equally understood and equally taken for granted in the enemy's countries quite as much as in ours that if his armies are defeated on the West the whole of his ambitious scheme in the East collapses.

What is not equally appreciated on our side of the Atlantic, and I suppose not on your side either, are both the magnitude of Germany's Eastern effort and the policy of division on which this new erection of states is based.

As to the policy of division—dividing in order to rule—the whole business of Prussia is to diminish and weaken Poland. Of all these states Poland is the only one with a real national consciousness of a great past and of high civilization. A strong Poland, with access to the sea, would destroy the Prussian scheme of conquest forever.

## Rendering Poland All But Powerless

The Prussian policy is not to annex more of Poland than has already been annexed by the shameless partitions of the past. That would give more trouble than it would be worth, for, as every example proves all over Europe, the attempt of one white civilized nation to govern even a small part of another white civilized nation against its will is a difficult, dangerous and exceedingly expensive operation. But if what is left of Poland can be surrounded by diverse states, each containing scattered and weak Polish minorities and each with a policy founded on opposition to the Polish claims for the reuniting of the subjugated peoples into a single nation, the Prussian object would be achieved. That is exactly what is being done. The largely artificial new state called the Ukraine—an academic term only recently come into use—and Lithuania are to have their frontiers drawn with the express purpose of limiting the poor remnant of Poland.

But apart from this policy of dismembering and bleeding the Polish nation—the one force she fears in the east—Prussia proposes to create other imperfect and artificial states full of the seeds of division among themselves.

In the Courland she will reply upon the German minority of rich men in towns and the rich land owners outside.

In Lithuania she will depend upon the hitherto not very accentuated divergence between Polish landlords and Lithuanian peasantry, with the organization of the Catholic Church flattered as much as is possible by the conqueror.

But from Lithuania she will take Livonia and make something separate of it, small as it is, to keep up general friction.

In Estonia she will work just the other way, and there she will depend upon the Protestant religion of the small population of a half million which it contains to remain pitted against the Catholic populations of the southern neighbors.

Rumania she intends to keep as it is now, divided in half with more than three million Rumanians subject to Magyar rule, but she will add to Rumania Bessarabia as a source of friction against the Ukraine, in so far as this last state can be said to have any real national feeling.

## Will Master Ukraine And Control Black Sea

The Ukraine she will pit against Poland by creating an artificial false frontier and subjecting many hundreds of thousands of Poles to alien rule, and she will "protect" that large territory, keeping it in strict economic dependence, controlling Odessa, mastering the Black Sea, cutting off Northern Russia from warm water and preventing one of the richest granaries of Europe from feeding the western part of the continent.

Lastly, we should remember what this great German scheme means in mere figures. There is a doubtful element in the constitution of the Ukraine which, according to whether it is made larger or smaller, shows a difference of five million in population. But with the Ukraine even in its narrowest limits this congeries of new, largely artificial and opposed states will actually double the German Empire in numbers. With the Ukraine at its largest they will more than double it.

There were before the war nearly sev-

enty million souls within the limits of the German Empire, including, of course, the annexed populations governed against their wills in the Polish and Danish provinces and in Alsace-Lorraine. In the new districts, which will be subject to the Central Empires, there is another sixty-five to seventy million. As for the dimensions of this district, the extreme length is a thousand miles and the average breadth perhaps three hundred, the extreme breadth, according to the limits of the Ukraine, being from six hundred and fifty to nearly eight hundred miles.

That is the state we have before us. That is the price to hold which the Germans are seeking a negotiated peace and the liberation of which can only be effected by our victory.

Another vital matter, which it is well to understand before the military operations recommence and with which the American public may be unfamiliar, is the question of civilian morale in Europe. Man is a citizen of a nation through an idea, just as he is a member of a religion through an idea. But, also, he is himself—he suffers in his body or in his immediate domestic affections—in far more positive fashion.

When the idea of a nation weakens and individual suffering or fatigue obscures it, then for the purposes of war between nations this moral factor declines. It is higher in some places to-day than in others. It may be reinforced by one policy, weakened by another. What is the gauge of it to-day? What sort of barometer can we consult? That depends upon our judgment—our right judgment—of the war under these last conditions of extreme strain, just as under the earlier conditions our judgment was based upon our calculation of numbers in men and material.

A perfect answer could be given only by a mind at once quite impartial among all the belligerents and at the same time perfectly informed. But a rough answer can be given by any one with fair information who has made a continuous study of the campaign. I think this rough answer is best arrived at by comparing the probable present views of the various governments and the populations dependent upon them.

## The Attitude of The Central Powers

First, let us consider the attitude of the Central Powers. The government of the German Empire, under its modern Prussian organization, thinks somewhat as follows:

"We and our allies form one solid territorial block in the midst of Europe. Of this block we, the German-speaking population, are almost exactly half. We are not only directors of it but masters. We have mainly to concern ourselves, therefore, with the state of mind of the German population. If that stands firm the whole mass will stand firm. We are blockaded by sea and the blockade has become very much more rigorous since the United States entered the war.

"The strain in the matter of food and of things almost as essential as food, such as soaps and lubricating materials, has gone on for a long time and produces a very depressing effect. The enormous mortality in the field, the rapidly rising figures of civilian mortality, and particularly of infant mortality, play their part.

"In any war but this such a strain would have passed the breaking point long ago. Men would long ago have reached a point where individual fatigue, suffering and grief would have outbalanced national ties and dissolved national discipline.

"On the other hand, we are fighting for our lives. We have done things which civilization will not forgive and which we can only compel it to retrieve by showing that we are invincible and therefore immune from punishment.

That is a great factor of strength, and the nation knows it.

"Next, we are fighting on foreign soil everywhere. We hold with our allies some two million prisoners. Tremendous efforts to break our front have failed in the West, and in the East we have completely succeeded. In Italy we but recently won the greatest victory of modern or ancient times. We are with in an ace of upsetting the equilibrium of our enemies and producing a general collapse.

"We had against us two groups of foes: on the one side ancient civilization, represented by Britain, Italy and France; on the other, a hodge-podge of far less developed Eastern communities, a perfect labyrinth of conflicting creeds and tongues, in the main Slav and deplorably organized. Of these last we have become unquestioned masters. They are defeated. We can do what we will with them and supplies from them will greatly relieve our internal strain.

"The first group, the ancient Western peoples resembles a shell which is still strong, but the contents of which are corrupt. They cannot do more than resist. Their internal materials, meanwhile, are wasting fast.

## How They View American Efforts

"The United States will bring a considerable accretion of men to the West, but this accretion will be brought neither in time nor in sufficient numbers to affect the issue.

"The quarrel of the poor against the rich within each of the Western states, the differing religions and national traditions of each, the inevitable misunderstandings which will arise between them in the last period of strain will do their work and we shall be victorious in this sense, at the very least, that we shall retain all we have occupied. We shall emerge stronger, comparatively, than when we challenged civilization in Europe three and a half years ago."

Such I believe to be the general attitude directing the German minds at this moment under Prussian influence and under the recent great relief which it derived through the break-up of the Russian Empire and the tremendous victory on the Italian front last October.

What will be the corresponding attitude—if one could make a sort of composite photograph of them—of the directing minds in Austria-Hungary? I think it will be somewhat as follows:

"Our state is essentially a dual state, standing on the two pillars of Magyar ascendancy in the East and the ascendancy of the German race in the West. Both combined are a minority. They are together only eighteen or nineteen millions in a total population of over fifty millions. But so long as they agree they are masters. The Rumanians, Slavs, a few Mahometans and considerable Jewish populations which are subject to these central masters can be kept subject to them, but only on certain terms. We have had to be very careful, even in times of peace, to accommodate and balance the various races which support the throne of Hapsburg-Lorraine.

"War has put upon us a very much worse strain than upon our North German allies and backers. We have lost something like four times as many men in prisoners; population for population, we have had more deaths. The absence of large towns and poorer communications have made central control more difficult and have inflicted upon us a strain of famine and disease worse than that in any belligerent country.

"We do not agree with our German allies that mere tenacity, indefinitely prolonged, will carry us through. But we do think that if we harp on the idea

of returning to our old state of affairs, especially if we talk of giving larger local freedom to the subject nations within our boundaries, the exhausted nations to the west of us will be moved to accept our terms.

"Meanwhile, we are very much afraid of what is going on in Russia. To the German Empire and its rulers it may seem nothing but a general break-up which offers them splendid opportunities of economic exploitation after the war. But the majority of our subject populations is Slav, and Slav popular movements have always been very catching. We look upon the progress of the Russian revolution with extreme anxiety, not because we fear resurrected Russian military power, but because we fear the spread of anarchy among our own Slav population.

"Early peace is urgently necessary to the continuance of our state."

Such I take to be the general attitude at this moment of those who survey from above or for their own interests the empire of the Hapsburgs, which is not a nation at all, but a government.

Now, what about the Western nations? The state that once was called Russia we can eliminate. It no longer exists. Three Western nations are the crux of the whole problem. Have they been misunderstood by the German authorities, and even by the Austrians? Is their internal organization stronger than the enemy imagines? Will it suffice to maintain the struggle until the enemy is defeated? (Without defeat and victory on one side or the other there is no permanent decision for Europe at all. Any one who conceives of permanent peace without it is living in a world of illusions.)

I cannot make so bold as to answer the question directly, but I can, at any rate, state how the problem looks to those who are governing in the three countries.

## Strain Heavy In Great Britain

To begin with Great Britain. The mind that is governing Great Britain (a most complicated organism—for it is not only political, but social and aristocratic; not only this, but highly commercial, and to that extent cosmopolitan; not only this, but financial, for London is the clearing house of the world) seems to stand somewhat thus:

"The strain is far heavier than we thought it would be even a year ago. We are mainly an industrial country, we are highly capitalistic and our social arrangements were never made for such a strain. The strain is worse because we are an island which lives by its imports, both of material and food, as a diver lives by his air tank.

"Finally, it is against us, in the shape of submarines, that the really heavy offensive of the last few months has been conducted. It is we who, therefore, have suffered the most rapidly increasing pressure. Meanwhile, we have had to improvise vast armies and at the same time act as a main workshop for the whole West, and that by a spontaneous and quite novel effort which those ignorant of our national character would have thought impossible. It has, indeed, surprised ourselves.

"Further, we have citizens (highly national and not without a certain moral elevation) who are quite ignorant of the mortal nature of war and who preach persistently and rather loudly of premature peace. Nevertheless, we are confident that the nation will stand the strain.

"Our confidence ultimately reposes in this: that there reside in Britain certain latent, silent and almost subconscious forces which are a sort of great reserve upon which the nation draws in time of great peril. Our nation is less

## How Morale of the Opposing Nations Stands as Year's Fighting Opens

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vocal than other nations; it is full of astonishingly individual and eccentric energies which make the foreigner think us divided. But the mass is tenacious in the highest degree, and, though confusedly, the mass does understand that this war is for this island (more than for any other part of Europe) a matter of life and death.

"Finally, we are consistently secure in the fibre of our race. The physical courage and the grip of tradition of which we boast have been amply justified in this war, and will continue to be justified in the future."

The Italian answer would be somewhat as follows:

"The nation which we govern has been recently organized as one whole. There is considerable differentiation between the north and the south. The various provinces are also differentiated among themselves very highly. Every elderly man still living among us remembers the time when Italy was not a nation. The national tie might, therefore, be thought weaker in every way, and in many ways it is weaker, than among our allies.

"Further, we are not among the original belligerents of the war. At its outset it did not directly menace our state, and could not have affected the lives of our individual citizens at all, though we took up arms against Austria, which holds subject certain not very large numbers of Italians and prevents the Adriatic from being, as it should be, an Italian sea. Yet we were slow to declare war against Germany. Like every other belligerent, we had no conception on entering the war of how prolonged a struggle it would be or how intense would be the strain before its close.

"But three things, each of great moment, will nerve our population to the end—first, the common pride, which even in a newly united state will not accept defeat, and which all civilization feels against the barbarian; next, the determination that the invader, now holding more Italian soil even than he did at the inception of our war, shall be driven out; and, lastly, the knowledge, confused indeed in the mass, but very clearly present in the souls of those who direct that if that party with which modern Italy has thrown her lot fails to achieve victory, the Italian population is ruined and the Italian national ideal, which was the inspiration of the nineteenth century, is lost."

## Nothing Sacred To French Mind

The French reply can be put much more shortly and simply, and it really is the core of the whole matter:

"We have as a government nothing traditional or sacred about us. The parliamentary régime in France is only an experiment, and not a very popular one at that. It arose in defeat, and it will certainly be modified after this great struggle; but we are members of a completely united nation, older as a nation than any European nation except Ireland, and our people feel this war to be their war as does no other belligerent people.

"We took the whole brunt of the first shock. We have suffered enormous losses. Invasion and ruin are still upon our soil. It was our military genius which checked the onslaught, with the fighting odds of five to eight, at the Marne. It was we who prevented the initial and easy victory of Germany. No internal differences count among us compared with our determination that the power which has attempted our destruction by the vilest means, by the violation of treaties, and by usages unheard of among civilized men, shall be destroyed. In this determination, with which the whole nation is filled, and of which we chance parliamentarians are merely the exponents, is rooted our certitude of victory. But we have suffered far more than any of our allies, precisely because we took the first shock. We are compelled, therefore, to trust in the reinforcement they will afford us. We will sacrifice every private difference between ourselves and those allies to the supreme common end.

"After victory there will be great domestic changes among us. They may be violent. They will certainly be fundamental. But the nation will not attempt them until victory is achieved."

There, I take it, is a fair picture of the contrasting and opposed views on civilian morale within the belligerent powers which each, could it speak by its existing authorities, would disclose.

The balance, the power to hold on, seems to me—quite apart from material considerations—to lie with the soul of the West; that is, with the ancient roots of Europe rather than with the Central Powers.